EXCISE E

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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: CATHOLIC BISHOPS' LETTER TO GOA

REF: (A) STATE 145178, (B) BUENOS AIRES 4843

B1, EC

1[redacted]PROVIDED EMBASSY THE FOLLOWING POINTS REGARDING THE ARGENTINE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE MARCH 14, 1978 LETTER TO PRESIDENT VIDELA:

-- BISHOPS' LETTER TRANSMITTED THE ANGUISH OF THE MANY ARGENTINES OVER THE CONTINUED DETENTION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PERSONS (DESAPARECIDOS) WHICH HAS OCCURRED IN THE COURSE OF THE NATIONAL REORGANIZATION PROCESS;

-- THANKED PRESIDENT VIDELA FOR RECEIVING THE INIQUIETUDE OF THE BISHOPS WHICH THEY AS PASTROS MUST EXPRESS;

-- NOTED THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PUBLICATION OF THE NAMES OF PRISONERS BEING DETAINED UNDER THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE POWER (PEN);

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-- STRESSED THAT BECAUSE OF THE ANXIETIES OF THE

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [redacted] DATE 4/20/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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MANY CONCERNED FAMILIES, THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM WAS THE UNEXPLAINED DISAPPEARANCES WHICH HAVE OCCURRED;

-- NOTED THAT IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR THE FAMILIES TO SUFFER THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DEATH OF THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS THAN TO SUFFER THE CONTINUOUS INCERTAINTUDE ABOUT THEIR FATE;

-- POINTED OUT THAT MANY FAMILIES OF DISAPPEARED PERSONS DO NOT KNOW THE LEGAL SITUATION REGARDING FAMILY AND PROPERTY MATTERS;

-- CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT THE BISHOPS WERE NOT ASKING FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT OF PRIESTS, BUT ASKED THAT THE GOVERNMENT COME TO SOME DECISION AND NOT LEAVE THE CASES OF THE PRIESTS UNDER PEN PENDING AND UNDECIDED;

-- THE LETTER WAS SIGNED BY ARCHBISHOP PRIMATESTA AS THE HEAD OF THE ARGENTINE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE.

2. SOURCE NOTED THAT PRESIDENT VIDELA HAD REACTED VERY STRONGLY TO THE LETTER, ESPECIALLY THE USE OF THE PHRASE "POLITICAL PRISONERS". SOURCE COMMENTED THAT CHURCH AUTHORITIES WERE SURPRISED BY THE STRENGTH OF VIDELA'S REACTION AS HE HAS OFTEN DISCUSSED WITH CHURCH OFFICIALS THE NEED TO ELIMINATE "BAD IDEAS AND THEIR PURVEYORS" FROM ARGENTINE SOCIETY.

3. SOURCE ALSO NOTED THAT THE MAJOR EFFORT OF
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THE VATICAN AND THE NUNCIATURA WERE DIRECTED AT THE TWO BASIC GOALS SET OUT IN THE BISHOPS' LETTER -- ACCOUNTING FOR THE DISAPPEAREDS AND ADJUDICATION OR RELEASE OF THOSE HELD UNDER EXECUTIVE DETENTION.
CASTRO

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